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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF
ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON
RELIGION OR BELIEF

Written statement submitted by the International Fellowship
of Reconciliation, a non-governmental organization in
consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which
is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 February 1995]

Religious restrictions in Tibet

1. Since 1985 the International Fellowship of Reconciliation has raised the question of religious restrictions in Tibet before the Commission. We therefore welcomed the decision of the People's Republic of China to invite the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance to visit China and Tibet in November 1994, in the hope that he could ascertain facts and recommend remedial measures. However, according to a number of reports, the Government of the People's Republic did not allow unrestricted access to the Special Rapporteur during his visit to Tibet. Five people who were in Tibet during the visit have given statements that they were unable to contact the Special Rapporteur because the team was attended by security forces, and its whereabouts were concealed from the public. Monks from certain monasteries and some students were not allowed in the centre of Lhasa during the visit.

Five days after the visit of the Special Rapporteur, seven monks from Sang-ngag Khang monastery, who we understand had wished to contact the Special Rapporteur, were arrested when they protested against political interference in their monastery. Such interference in the work of the Special Rapporteur prevents him from ascertaining the facts of the situation and negates the benefit of extending an invitation to him.

2. There is strong evidence that since July 1994 the Chinese authorities have increased restrictions on religious practice in Tibet. These restrictions, the most serious for 15 years, are not merely local initiatives but were endorsed by the "Third National Forum on Work in Tibet", a CCP Central Committee and State Council meeting held in Beijing in July 1994.

3. On the day of the Special Rapporteur's arrival in Tibet the Chinese authorities published the decision of the "Third National Forum" on religion, which states that the number of monks and nuns is to be fixed and spells out that the building of monasteries is to be halted. The decision demands political intervention in religious affairs, declaring that monks and nuns "must learn to reform all those aspects of religion which are not suitable to the socialist society ... we should reform canons and religious rituals that are unsuitable for the socialist society."

4. The restrictive policies adopted in July 1994 have already been implemented in Tibet. This can be seen from 20 testimonies written in November 1994 by Tibetans, including members of three monasteries and one group of nuns, for presentation to the Special Rapporteur. They were unable to hand them to him in person, but in December 1994 the documents were dispatched through other means and made available both to this organization and to the Special Rapporteur. These 20 testimonies give examples of the following current restrictions on religious freedom.

5. Ban on possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama. In August 1994 the Government banned the display of photographs of the Dalai Lama in offices and in the homes of government employees. Penalties include loss of earnings, being sacked, being "guilty of an offence", and unspecified "severe punishment". In some rural areas the ban has been applied not just to officials but to all residents. "In Nagchu prefecture a strict order was issued prohibiting keeping photographs of the Dalai Lama both on altars and on the person. In November 1994 nomads were forced to publicly burn, tear up or otherwise get rid of photographs of the Dalai Lama," according to one testimony. The ban on these photographs is the fulfilment of an order by the Third National Forum, which demanded that cadres, "the people", monks and nuns "should firmly make a clean break with the Dalai clique" ^{1/}. Although the political views of the Dalai Lama may differ from those of the Chinese authorities, they do not constitute a threat to public order or fundamental freedoms as defined in article 1, paragraph 3, of the Declaration on Religious Intolerance.

^{1/} "The Golden Bridge to Reach the New Era ... Reference Materials for Publicising the Guidelines of the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet", TAR Communist Party Propaganda Circular, published in Tibet Daily (Tibetan language edition), 25 November 1994.

6. Ban on religious activities amongst government employee. Six of the 20 testimonies say that government officials in Tibet are now not allowed to possess "any religious objects such as statues, scriptures and reliquaries" or to perform "any kind of religious activities". One submission describes an official document called "Document No. 8", issued in July 1994 by the Chinese Communist Party, which bans government employees "from engaging in any form of activity which involves religious symbols". This prohibition applies both to employees and to their families, even where the other family members are not government employees. This is an act of discrimination against employees and their relatives based on their religious beliefs.

7. Restrictions on the reconstruction of monasteries.

"At present the number of monasteries, monks and nuns in our region are sufficient to fulfil the needs of the daily religious practice of the masses," says the Propaganda Circular published on 25 November 1994. This indicates that a limit has been set on the number of monasteries, as well as of monks and nuns, which will be allowed in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

8. Limit on admission of new monks and nuns. Several testimonies confirmed that since the July 1994 meeting officials have inspected monasteries and have ordered that any monks or nuns who are additional to the new limit must be expelled. In Sera monastery, Lhasa, where there are currently some 500 monks, the limit has been set at about 200. "A Chinese 'Work Team' arrived in the monastery with the warning that if they increase the number of monks above the fixed limit, then all the monks would be expelled," said a testimony about Sera. In the monasteries of Sang-ngag Khang and Gathab, no new admissions are allowed: "Even when a monk has died or discontinued his monastic life, it is still not permitted for him to be replaced," according to one statement. In November 1994 police visited Michungri nunnery near Lhasa and without explanation "ordered a number of nuns from this nunnery to leave for their respective homes."

9. Ban on admission of monks under 18 years. Several testimonies complained about the ban against monks under 18 years of age, which limits the choice of parents to find places of education for children. In Rato monastery in Chushur, "the parents of about 30 monks below 18 were ordered to take back their boys from the monastery," and would otherwise be liable to pay a fine of 1,500 yuan (about US\$ 180, three times the average annual income). The ruling ignores the fact that many Tibetans regard monasteries as the best providers of education for their children.

10. Restriction on religious teaching. Religious teaching is restricted, and government permission has to be sought for senior lamas to give religious teachings and hold ceremonies. "When the monks of Sera Monastery requested Lama Kangyur Rinpoche to bestow the transmission by reading of the Kangyur, the TAR Government refused to grant permission," said one statement. Another reported that teachers in schools are not allowed to speak about religion in lessons. These restrictions violate article 5, paragraph 2, and article 6 (e) of the Declaration.

11. Punishments for monks and nuns accused of political dissent. Many statements testify that monks and nuns who have been suspected of dissident

opinions have been expelled from their religious institutions and discriminated against. "Monks and nuns who have been accused of political contacts are all deprived of educational opportunities. They are all unemployed and have no means to earn their living. The main reason is that these people ... opposed the State," it was alleged. Fifteen nuns were expelled from Garu nunnery near Lhasa in 1994 and were "banned from engaging in any religious activities and handed over to their parents with a warning that they are prohibited to enter any nunnery or monastery," according to one of the reports written for the Special Rapporteur.

12. Restrictions on the lives and movement of monks and nuns. The TAR Public Security Regulations of September 1994 instruct police to "strengthen, in accordance with the law, the management of temples, monasteries, and other places of religious activities." Accordingly police posts have been established in the main monasteries, so that "the monks are always under surveillance by agents inside and outside the monasteries," according to one testimony. This is especially true of monks belonging to the Gelugpa sect, associated with the Dalai Lama. Movement of monks and nuns is subject to restrictions. "The Chinese are imposing a ban forbidding the monks and nuns from visiting Lhasa on Holy Days," according to one statement. In most monasteries monks have to seek permission from lay officials and police before travelling.

13. Interference in the Selection of Religious Leaders. The Chinese authorities have taken over the process of selecting religious leaders, and have declared that only the State can recognize spiritual leaders. "In recognizing the reincarnations of the Tulkus [incarnate lamas] of Tibetan Buddhism, we must follow the relevant decisions of the State," announced the Third National Forum. This contradicts religious and popular tradition and is widely resented by Tibetans, who want the Dalai Lama and relevant religious leaders to be in charge of the selection process.

14. The International Fellowship regrets that the Chinese Government has imposed further restrictions on religious practice in Tibet and that it restricted access to the Special Rapporteur. IFOR commends the Special Rapporteur on his ongoing efforts and exhorts him to keep the situation in Tibet under close examination. We call upon the Commission to reinforce independent access to all Special Rapporteurs.
